

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
for
Environmental Assessment No. OR-030-04-018
Sarah Winnemucca Interpretive Site

EA OR-030-04-018 thoroughly analyzes the impacts and clearly indicates that the preferred alternative (Alternative B) would not significantly affect quality of the human environment. Specific additional mitigation identified in the EA will be applied to the proposed action to minimize or avoid impacts, even though the proposed action, without mitigation, does not rise to the level of “significant,” as defined in 40 CFR 1508.

To make this finding of no significant impact (FONSI), BLM considered the “context” (or scope), as well as the “intensity” of impacts. The preferred alternative, as described, would have little, if any, effect on the human environment at the national level or beyond. The physical effects of projects would be minuscule and largely unnoticeable even at the local level. Of the over five million acres of BLM land in the Vale District, this action will provide substantial public benefit and will physically affect less than one acre. The action contemplated is not irreversible and the only irretrievable commitments are in the funding and associated materials and labor necessary to put the interpretive site in place and maintain it. The short-term benefit of the interpretive site will be the addition of a physical site that allows for documentation of the areas rich historical and cultural heritage. Over the long-term, the interpretive site may attract additional visitors that might not otherwise visit the area, which may have a small but noticeable positive effect on the local economy of Rome, Jordan Valley, and possibly McDermitt.

The “intensity” of impacts, beneficial and adverse, is thoroughly described in the EA. Intensity is a component of “significance” and is determined by applying ten criteria (see CEQ regulations Sec. 1508.27). In review of these criteria, relative to the preferred alternative, I have found:

Beneficial and adverse effects. Though on balance the cumulative effects are positive, there would be no significant effects (positive or negative) relative to the CEQ definition.

Public health or safety. There would be no significant effects on public health or safety. Sight distance is adequate in both directions to allow safe access to and departure from the interpretive site along Highway 95. During construction of the turnout to the site, normal safety procedures used by Oregon Department of Transportation for highway construction and maintenance will assure safety of construction workers and the public and will be within accepted norms for such work.

Unique areas. There are no unique, specially managed areas near the interpretive site that would be affected by its construction and use.

Highly Controversial Effects. The interpretive site was universally supported by all parties contacted during scoping, including the several associated Indian Tribes.

Unique or unknown risks. There are no unique or unknown risks associated with the implementation of the preferred alternative.

Precedent for future actions. There are no precedents, relative to future actions with significant effects, which would be established. There are no irreversible commitments of resources involved with the preferred alternative.

Cumulative Effects. The impacts of proposed action have been analyzed and considered, separately and cumulatively, at multiple scales of analysis through the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (SEORMP/EIS), and this EA. Impacts of this separate action are not significant. The cumulative effect of implementation of the preferred alternative is also not significant and is within the scope of the cumulative effects analysis disclosed in the SEORMP/EIS, which this EA specifically incorporates by reference.

Impacts to significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The interpretive site is specifically designed and proposed to allow the public to gain appreciation for the cultural and historical resources of the area without creating impacts to those resources.

Federally listed endangered or threatened species. There are no federally listed species in the immediate vicinity of the interpretive site, nor are there expected to be any impacts to any listed species.

Compliance with Federal, State, or local law. The proposed alternative is in compliance with federal, state, and local law and requirements relative to environmental protection. Further, it is in conformance with the SEORMP/EIS and ROD and also conforms to the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines.

Therefore, based upon my review and for the foregoing reasons, no Environmental Impact Statement is required.

s/Wayne Wetzel, Acting Field Manager
Jordan Resource Area

December 16, 2004

Authorized Official

Date